

**OPTIONS FOR AN AWARDS PROGRAM  
FOR RESEARCH INTO URBAN POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENT**

**A report prepared for**

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## **OPTIONS FOR AN AWARDS PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH INTO URBAN POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **Background**

With the closing of the Cities Feeding People (CFP) Program Initiative (PI) and the launching of the Urban Poverty and Environment (UPE) PI, the Agropolis Awards program has been suspended. UPE contracted an evaluation of the results of Agropolis and of the lessons learned from it in order to develop a new awards program to support to young researchers.

IDRC's mission and programs have always included support for advanced education and training of one kind or another, from awards to individuals pursuing degree programs, to a variety of activities designed to enable individuals to learn and strengthen specialized research skills and methodologies.

Paragraph 20 of the **Effectiveness and resilience** section of the Centre's **Program Framework 2005-2010**, notes that "In practice, the argument for effective programming boils down" to a number of points, the last one being a "greater emphasis on modalities such as fellowships and awards programs, and networked clusters of project efforts on related themes."

The description of the contribution which fellowships and awards can make to IDRC that appears in the final section of the final paragraph (126) of the **Program Framework** maps virtually exactly on to the results of Agropolis, and provides a fundamental rationale for a new UPE awards program for young researchers:

*A final area where we expect an increased emphasis is in the use of competitive grants mechanisms, and fellowships and awards.*

***Competitive grants** mechanisms are a useful complement to more capacity-building focused activities (though the two are not mutually exclusive.) Although setting them up is labour-intensive, once established, they have the potential to achieve several goals, often simultaneously. Most of these programs have the added advantage of being easily expandable, in size and scope, with relatively few labour inputs (the flip side of having high start-up costs.) This makes partnering possible at various stages of the process. These include:*

- training and capacity building in a new methodology;*
- raising visibility for a niche development issue;*
- network creation;*
- raising visibility for IDRC's work;*
- bringing scholars and practitioners of international calibre into the Centre's orbit;*

- *systematizing the process of grants allocation and making it more transparent.*

*Fellowships and awards are a sub-set of the competitive granting modality. .... This process creates the talent pool for other Centre endeavours over time and completes the portion of the Centre's research "life-cycle," which has been relatively neglected for decade or so. In addition to expanding the resources available to support Canadian graduate students to carry out fieldwork in developing countries, a program will be (re-) created to support developing-country graduate students to undertake fieldwork and/or study in a Canadian university.*

Surveys by various donor agencies, including IDRC, suggest that training aimed at improving research capacity can also strengthen project and research management skills, ICT skills, participation in research networks, relations with external agencies and donors, and other capacities and capabilities.

## **Terms of Reference**

The contract for this evaluation directs the consultant to "learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the Agropolis Awards program how a new program to support young researchers could best be organized to complement the thrust of the UPE PI." The following tasks are specified:

- a) assess the contribution of the Agropolis Awards program to IDRC- CFP goals, and to the development of a knowledge base on urban agriculture as well as the capacity of young researchers;
- b) assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program outcomes and administration of the program;
- c) recommend opportunities to be pursued, and possible initiatives to avoid, with particular consideration for how to best administer a new program;
- d) Suggest a proposal framework for a new awards program that meets the needs of the UPE team and its objectives.

## **Procedure**

The initial plan of the evaluation provided for my meeting with the UPE team following submission of a progress report and preliminary recommendations. Following my preliminary review of most of the documentation and of most of the interviews, however, Mark Redwood suggested instead that I submit a list of questions that he would discuss with the UPE team members, and then provide me with feedback. I submitted these March 5, and a progress report March 10 (a copy is attached as Appendix B). On May 2, Jean D'Aragon forwarded to me

comments of the UPE team meeting April 25 which brainstormed around the questions I had sent to Mark Redwood.

On the understanding from ongoing discussions with Mark Redwood that the UPE is most concerned with the operation and administration of a potential future awards program, the analysis of the data, information and views collected concentrated chiefly on these aspects of the Agropolis Awards program. The relation of awardees' topics to CFP themes and the program's overall contribution to CFP themes and projects were therefore reviewed but not analyzed. The summary report on these in the preliminary progress report was deemed satisfactory for this purpose.

I also reviewed information gathered from other organisations that have awards programs, including a previous report on *Advanced Education and Training Options Available to IDRC* prepared for the Special Initiatives Division in 2005.

Appendix A contains the lists of the documentation reviewed, the 10 persons interviewed and the 5 awardees who responded to a general e-mail inquiry.

### **Constraints and Limitations**

Interviews with Advisory Board members and award recipients depended on being able to contact them during the period of the contract.

As noted above, UPE's chief concern is with the operation and administration of a potential future awards program. This report is therefore limited to an outline of several options and their potential consequences, and recommendations to UPE of specific issues to consider in developing a future program.

## **2. The Context**

UPE is taking an integrated approach to environment and natural resources issues in cities, working within the themes of urban agriculture, urban water and sanitation, waste management, and vulnerabilities to natural disasters, with land tenure as a crosscutting issue. The team has two chief concerns about an awards program that would replace Agropolis: its administrative design, structure and implementation; and the nature of its relation to UPE projects.

At its April 25 brainstorming session, the UPE team arrived at a number of conclusions concerning a new award program for young researchers:

1. It is necessary for UPE to keep some kind of "control" over the themes that will be explored;
2. administration may be outsourced to a Northern institution;

3. the new program should include support for project-based proposals, in addition to traditional academic papers;
4. awards will be attributed competitively, not formatively;
5. there will be no post-doctoral awards;
6. Canadians will continue to be eligible for awards;
7. regional institutions may be contracted to organize meetings of awardees;
8. UPE must receive inputs from awardees; and
9. the potential value of a multi-disciplinary advisory/selection committee must be considered.

### **3. Program functional components**

The preliminary progress report concluded that while the concept and substance of the Agropolis awards program had been carefully elaborated, and that it had met its basic objectives, it needed fine-tuning, as the mechanisms for its functioning seemed almost to have evolved as circumstances suggested or required.

A scholarship/fellowship awards program (simply called “program” from this point) can be analyzed in terms of its functional elements (i.e., the tasks that are carried out in establishing, administering and managing it) and variables that determine its operationalization (e.g. program objectives, the relation of awards to the organization’s other activities, types and levels of awards, the structure of program components and allocation of administrative responsibilities, etc.).

This part 3 outlines the basic tasks of a program, and the requirements for performing them – in effect, *the minimum required to operate a new program of awards to young researchers*. Part 4 considers the variables available to UPE in developing a new program. Part 5 outlines three options for implementing a program, and summarizes possible consequences of not launching a new one. Part 6 summarizes the conclusions of this review, and Part 7 lists a number of recommendations for UPE to consider in developing a new program of awards for young researchers.

The analysis of program documentation and of the information gleaned from interviews, together with information about the administration and management of other scholarship and fellowship programs (both at IDRC and at other organizations) yields a rough-and-ready categorization of the tasks or functions required for such programs to operate in a minimally efficient and effective



fashion. While practically speaking these categories have no hard and fast boundaries, they are useful as concepts to assess whether and how they could be distributed among different individuals and/or organizations. In conjunction with the variables outlined in Part 4, these categories and their descriptions provide a basis for Terms of Reference for the management and administration of a future program.

### *3.1 Preliminary tasks*

The preliminary tasks of a program consist of developing general program goals and objectives; designing and producing application materials; and distributing these materials.

#### *Developing program goals and objectives*

This task includes developing criteria and procedures for assessing applications, and requires knowledge and understanding of the organization's mission, goals and objectives, and experience with the assessment of proposals designed to address a program's objectives.

#### *Designing and producing application materials*

The materials include program announcements, the application form, a description of the goals and objectives of the program, eligibility requirements, the criteria and procedures that will be used to evaluate and select applicants, the application deadline and a notice of how receipt will be acknowledged, the date of the announcement of results, forms for supervisors, references, and host institutions and organizations, and a checklist. Developing and assembling this material requires knowledge and understanding of the program objectives, of the relation of the program to any other activity or program, technical skills in designing application materials, and access to production facilities.

#### *Distributing the materials*

Distributing program publicity and materials so that it attracts pertinent applications is challenging. It requires knowledge and understanding of the intended audience, of the most effective means of reaching it, and access to appropriate tools (e.g. a Web site) and contact information (e.g. names and addresses of research institutions, links with research networks and other partner organizations, etc.).

### *3.2 Evaluation and selection*

When applications arrive, they are received and verified for completeness – a minimum form of assessment. The evaluation of complete applications and the selection of awardees can be summarized as two general sets of tasks: screening and evaluation. But within each set, tasks and procedures can be elaborated in a variety of ways. The evaluation process may also be one of

two kinds: strictly competitive; or formative. The UPE team has rejected the idea of using formative assessment.

#### *Receiving applications and verifying their completeness*

When an application is received, it is recorded and an acknowledgement is sent. A checklist is used to verify its completeness. These tasks require comprehension of the program in order to judge whether applications are not only formally completed, but also are appropriate responses to the program's objectives. They also require access to a system for recording and reporting, and a mechanism for referring problematic cases (e.g. where the appropriateness of a proposal or field of research is ambiguous or unclear).

#### *Screening applications*

All applications verified as complete, and any ambiguous ones, are reviewed against a set of published criteria. A numerical or weighted scoring system is used, or a combination of both, to establish a ranked list of applications. This requires a thorough understanding of the objectives of the program, of the meaning of the criteria, and how to apply them.

#### *Selecting awardees*

Awardees are selected by reviewing the rankings produced in the screening of applications in the context of the general program goals and objectives, using specific selection criteria designed to assess the relevance of proposals to program goals, and in the light of the budget allocated for the competition. This stage of the procedure most often focuses on applications at the margin, and requires an understanding of the history of the program, its relation and relevance to other current and planned activities of the organization, and of any risks involved.

### *3.3 Award take-up*

#### *Notices of awards and awardee contracts*

After the selected applicants are notified and accept their awards, contracts are issued specifying the terms and conditions of the award, including policy on their extension. This requires expertise in drafting contracts that specify clearly the undertakings and obligations of the awarding organization and of the person accepting the award, and the consequences of failure to specify or satisfy these.

#### *Awardee activities*

Payments are issued when awardees begin their activities and report on them, their financial and technical reports are monitored, and they submit final reports and/or theses. Some awardees may request extensions of their period of tenure of the award. These require systems for recording and reviewing actions and reports, for verifying that milestones have been observed and that expenditures followed contractual conditions, and for reporting program status at scheduled times. Consideration of extensions requires understanding of the objectives of the program and appreciation of the circumstances of field research (normally, extensions are only approved in exceptional circumstances, if at all).

### *3.4 General management and administration*

The basic administrative tasks of a program consist of the management of general program files, awardee files, and the program database; the production of documents, reports, articles and other information describing the program and its results; monitoring the budget; reviewing and analyzing the program and trends; and revising and developing the program.

#### *Records management*

The management of general program files, awardee files and a program database requires a records management system, capacity to develop and maintain databases, and systems to extract and manipulate information and data from these records.

#### *Reports and Publicity*

Producing reports, documents, and articles about the program and its results for UPE, for the Centre and for public distribution requires analytic and synthetic skills, comprehension of the goals and objectives of the program, and capacity to produce and disseminate materials in a variety of media, or access to that capacity.

#### *Financial management*

The program budget is monitored with monthly and annual reports of the status of commitments, payments, and reports of expenditures. Quarterly reports may also be produced. This function requires accounting and financial systems and management skills.

#### *Program monitoring and review*

The program is reviewed annually to assess how it meets its goals and objectives, to identify problems and devise solutions, and to prepare an annual report. This requires a thorough knowledge and understanding of the program goals and objectives, analytic and synthetic skills, imagination and an appreciation of the constraints which the real world imposes on awardees' implementation of their projects.

### *Program analysis and development*

Analysis of the program and trends in the fields related to it is performed both informally, as staff monitor reports, and formally at determined periods to inform the annual review. Formal analyses are carried out in order to develop and revise the program at determined periods. These activities require a thorough knowledge and understanding of the goals and objectives of the organization and of the program, analytic and synthetic skills, imagination and an appreciation of the constraints which the real world imposes on awardees' implementation of their projects.

#### **4. Program variables to consider**

UPE's April 25, 1006 brainstorming meeting highlighted two basic factors that will affect the shape of a UPE program of awards to young researchers:

-that the team has neither the time nor specific expertise for program operational logistics, which must therefore be outsourced (from this point, the organization will be called "the body managing logistics"), and

-that it wishes to enhance the relation of the awardees' work with the rest of UPE activities ("it is considered necessary to keep some kind of "control" over the themes that will be explored"<sup>1</sup>).

These two factors and the several decisions agreed at the April 25 meeting ensure that the program tasks will include more than the basic ones outlined in the previous Part 3. A number of options exist to operationalize some of the tasks, specifically those related to program objectives and the relation of awards to UPE themes; to the types of awards; to details of the selection process; and to some of the general administration tasks. It is also appropriate to consider potential impacts on IDRC.

#### *4.1 Preliminary tasks*

##### *Developing program goals and objectives*

The general objective of the AGROPOLIS Awards program was "[T]o contribute to the development of expertise sanctioned by a university degree and field experience in various areas of specialization in urban agriculture, through issue-focussed graduate training in developing and developed countries and institutional networking."<sup>2</sup> This objective in effect defined the awards program as a general tool of the CFP PI, whose goal "to support development research that seeks

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<sup>1</sup> Young Researchers (new program) Awards Meeting Tuesday, April 25 2006 - notes forwarded by Jean D'Aragon, May 2 2006

<sup>2</sup> approved October 2, 2001 in the PAD

to remove constraints and enhance the potential of for urban agriculture” allowed considerable scope in the types and focus of activities to be supported.

The number and range of disciplines covered by the UPE Program goal “to ease environmental burdens that exacerbate poverty in selected cities by strengthening the capacity of the poor to equitably access environmental services, reduce environmental degradation and vulnerability to natural disasters, and enhance use of natural resources for food, water, and income security” go considerably beyond the scope of the preceding CFP PI. More specifically, the PI’s objectives “are to support research, capacity building, and networking that help poor urban communities partner with local and national governments, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders”<sup>3</sup>

The April 25 discussions indicate a variety of views in the UPE team concerning the objectives of the awards programs. Some priority appears to be favoured for proposals that address the themes in the UPE Prospectus. At the same time, there is a desire to “leave some room for new ideas to feed UPE.” The suggestion for keeping the call for proposals open while introducing specific questions every year is perhaps a compromise or blend of these views. A main concern, however, is to find more effective ways to connect the work of awardees to the ongoing activities and projects of UPE. This reflect a concern in the Agropolis files and in the responses received from former Agropolis awardees. The EcoHealth program has similar concerns.

#### A general framework for thinking about the relation of awards to UPE

As noted in the UPE Prospectus, “while information is easy to transfer electronically, knowledge seems to travel most efficiently through a human network”. The study of knowledge management projects to which this statement refers notes four kinds of objectives that characterize successful projects of this kind: (1) creating repositories by storing knowledge and making it easily available to users; (2) providing access to knowledge and facilitating its transfer; (3) establishing an environment that encourages the creation, transfer, and use of knowledge; and (4) managing knowledge as an asset on the balance sheet. These objectives can usefully be applied to consider how to integrate an awards program with the rest of UPE activity. For the purposes of this report, these objectives can be treated as tasks.

- (1) *Creating repositories* by storing knowledge and making it easily available to users: this technical task would be accomplished by collecting, cataloguing, storing and publicizing the reports and theses of awardees in both hard and electronic forms, at IDRC and at the body managing program logistics.
- (2) *Providing access to knowledge and facilitating its transfer*: this task adds value to the previous one by reviewing and assessing the materials received and producing and compiling summaries, fact sheets, general reviews and reports of the program,

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<sup>3</sup> p. 1, UPE Program Prospectus 2005-2010

publishing edited collections of the results of awardees' research (e.g. the Agropolis book), producing further studies based on awardees' research results, etc. It would be carried out at IDRC and at the body managing program logistics, both directly and by contracting individuals with appropriate expertise.

- (3) *Establishing an environment* that encourages the creation, transfer, and use of knowledge: this task looks very much like a core activity of IDRC Program Initiatives as they work with partners to develop projects, and stimulate and support networks, workshops, and meetings. In an awards program, this would include keeping the call for proposals open while suggesting a particular interest in receiving proposals on some specific questions or themes. It would also involve contact between UPE and awardees through workshops, other meetings and inclusion of awardees in UPE electronic networks, and by continuing dialogue with awardees whose research (whether academic or applied) bears a strong relation to UPE projects. Decisions on the nature and focus of these elements would be made by UPE on the basis of continuing dialogue with awardees and the body managing logistics, which would manage the organization and administration of the activities.

Examples of activities that would help to connect awardees and their work more effectively with UPE include a workshop where awardees present papers on their research, a week-long training workshop for awardees prior to their starting field work, (cf. EcoHealth), and a summer institute for current and previous awardees to develop projects and/or to link them with existing projects or even projects under development to which their research could make a contribution. Participants in these events could include UPE team members, external experts (including Advisory Committee members), former awardees and representatives of the body managing logistics.

- (4) *Managing knowledge as an asset on the balance sheet*: this task consists of regular (at least annual) reviews and assessments of the results of program activity in order to establish its contribution to the PI's overall objectives, and to assess its return on IDRC's investment. It would be carried out by UPE using data provided by the body managing logistics and feedback from other sources that have had contact with the awardees and with program activities.

### Types of awards

In my previous discussions with IDRC staff about training<sup>4</sup>, there has been strong advocacy for training that enables researchers to work with organizations, communities, policy makers, etc.,

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<sup>4</sup> Most recently, in the review of the Small Grants facility and in the review of training options, both for SID.

outside the academic world to address development issues. This orientation is reflected in increasing IDRC support for training activities that facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge to non-researchers, and that include them in the design and implementation of research activities. The notes of the April 25 brainstorming session confirm this direction.

#### Level of awards

UPE has decided to keep the awards restricted to Master's and PhD students for the completion of research requirements, and that awardees should be supported by both their own institutions and local NGOs. In addition, Canadians should continue to be eligible, given IDRC's mandate to work with Canadian institutions, with the level and extent of support to be defined.

#### Awards for applied research

UPE has also endorsed the idea of supporting project-based "applied" research, such as projects in design and architecture, and to "explore ways of funding publishing the papers or results of the experiments". Each would require allocating a specific amount of the program budget, based on an analysis of typical costs.

#### Prizes to recognize achievement

A cash prize has also been suggested for the best article by an awardee on her/his research published in a peer-reviewed journal. Given the small number of awardees annually, it would not be awarded annually, but perhaps once every three years.

#### Examples of awards by other organizations

Many programs exist to support young researchers in the South<sup>5</sup>, but none appear to have the same configuration as either the Agropolis or EcoHealth Awards programs. Only two have some similar concerns with the connection of awardees to institutions in the South.

The programs of support to young researchers and PhD students of France's *Institut de recherche pour le développement* (IRD) and the UK Wellcome Trust program for Master's students aim among other objectives to strengthen awardees' links with researchers and research institutions in the South. Provisions of these programs might be adapted to a UPE program to strengthen networking and connections between UPE and the awardees, both during and after their tenure.

France's *Institut de recherche pour le développement* (IRD) focuses on applied development studies with a slant towards urban studies, public health, environment, globalisation in an inter-

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<sup>5</sup> For a summary overview, see *Advanced Education and Training Options Available to IDRC*, prepared for the Special Initiatives Division, March 2005.

disciplinary, comparative approach. Its programs attach young researchers to institutions in the South which partner with the Institut. The *Bourses d'Insertion de Jeunes chercheurs* are designed to promote the employment of award-holders by research and higher education institutions in the South. A combination of having awardees propose research on a topic of direct interest to the host institution, and having the host institution administer the award, ensures both professional and administrative contact throughout tenure. The PhD Thesis Support awards promote networking among institutions in the South by targetting awardees from countries that have no or few doctoral programs and requiring that they produce their thesis with an institution in the South. UPE might consider encouraging candidates to propose research on a topic of interest to an institution or organization in the South that has links with IDRC; or consider allocating a number of awards to applicants from countries with no doctoral programs.

The UK *Wellcome Trust Population Studies Programme* (PSP) includes a master's fellowship program combining research training (which can consist of formal taught courses, part-time, modular or distance-learning programs at internationally recognised centres of excellence in research training excluding those in the USA) and a research project in a research-active setting or within existing research programs in the South, and tailored to the needs and career plans of the awardee. It is delivered directly through the PSP and indirectly via a block grant to the Centre for Reproductive Biology, University of Edinburgh to run an MSc Research Training Programme in Reproductive Health. A 2003 review found high satisfaction with the taught element of all courses but some concern about the supervisory support that students received while completing a research project 'back home'. Some of the issues were resolved through better links and continuity between the training institution and the home institution. Individuals cited enhanced research skills, contact building and career development as the most important benefits of the program. The majority of past awardees not only work in their home countries in the South, but have received promotions as a result of the support they received from the program. UPE might consider partnering with an institution of research excellence both to deliver a training program (in collaboration with UPE-named experts) at the start of awardees' tenure and to manage program logistics.

These examples suggest other variations that UPE could consider, such as orienting awards more directly towards integrating awardees into research or research-related institutions and networks, and contracting a pre-field applied research training component to a specialized research body.

#### *Receiving applications and verifying their completeness*

Notice of receipt to applicants would include the information that only successful applications will be announced, with the date of the announcement (e.g., "if you do not receive a letter notifying you of an award by day/month, you will not receive an award"). It could also include a brief set of FAQs to preclude staff having to respond to further enquiries.



## *4.2 Selection process*

### *Screening applications*

Both the Agropolis and EcoHealth Awards programs have used a two-tier selection process. In the first stage, IDRC staff (normally PI team members, and ideally PhD holders) screen all eligible and complete applications to produce a short list from which to make the final selection. In the second stage, external experts review the short-listed applications and participate in a discussion with PI team members which works towards consensus on the awards.

The screening process could also be carried out by external experts who are either staff members of, or contracted by, the body managing logistics. UPE would approve the experts or appoint them, have one team member participate in the screening, or only review the short list.

### *Selection and the Advisory Committee*

UPE appears to prefer having an Advisory Committee (AC) for the final adjudication and selection of awardees, believing that the benefits of having a highly qualified multi-disciplinary committee far outweigh the costs. It would be possible for the body managing logistics to appoint the AC, independently following guidelines established by UPE, or in consultation with UPE. It could also hold the selection meeting, either independently of UPE (i.e., with its own expert staff members and the AC), or include one or more UPE team members in the meeting.

Until the last competition of the Agropolis program, the AC played a dual role. It reviewed the applications that had made it through the screening process and made recommendations for awards, and provided policy and program advice to CFP. The AC met at IDRC until the last competition, when the meeting was held as a teleconference supplemented by e-mail correspondence. No policy or program advice was recorded in the minutes of this last meeting. It is not clear whether the Agropolis AC had a formal role in giving policy and program advice, or whether the advice grew informally out of the discussions about applications among its members and CFP staff.

In the past, the EcoHealth awards program has only used two external reviewers in each competition to help adjudicate applications. Their views and recommendations were discussed with them in a teleconference that concluded with decisions on awards.

A committee whose members remain for a period of years (and on a rotating basis) is more likely to be able to give useful advice on program policy and development. The pertinence and effectiveness of this advice would be fostered by formalizing this task, and providing to members brief documentation on issues of concern to UPE before meetings, whether face-to-face or by teleconference.

### *Advisory Committee meetings*

In my interviews, I found mixed views about the values of face-to-face meetings and teleconferences. The cost and logistics of the former are clearly greater than the latter. Whether the dynamics of a face-to-face meeting yield more useful and penetrating insights and results than a teleconference is a matter of debate. There is also ambivalence or uncertainty whether the acknowledged value of face-to-face meetings justifies their costs.

It is clear that the opinions of independent experts form a necessary part of the program selection process. The EcoHealth experience and the last Agropolis competition suggest that a well-organized and structured teleconference is adequate for making valid decisions. But the overall Agropolis experience appears to suggest that face-to-face meetings may provide more benefit to the program by allowing space for drawing general conclusions and advice about the program. It seems likely, however, that sending AC members a short briefing document outlining policy and program issues to be discussed during a teleconference could achieve similar results.

The variation in which the body managing logistics manages the entire evaluation and selection process points to a secondary question about the role of the Advisory Committee: should it provide policy advice to the program?

### *The advisory function*

A multidisciplinary panel of experts external to the Centre provides credibility and legitimacy to the selection process. Their professional engagement disposes them to do more than make recommendations for and against awards and offer advice and guidance on the refinement and implementation of proposals. UPE should consider how best to benefit from this disposition: to make discussions of awards program policy and general operations an explicit agenda item of the meetings, or to welcome comments informally as they arise in the discussions of applications. It should also consider how dialogue with this group compares to dialogue with other researchers involved with UPE.

## *4.3 Award take-up activities*

### *Workshops and/or summer institutes for awardees*

Some form of group activity of awardees would help to address the concern to find more effective ways to connect the work of awardees to the ongoing activities and projects of UPE. The experience of the Agropolis workshop and of the EcoHealth training week at the beginning of award tenure and summer institute later in the project cycle confirm that careful planning of these activities can yield considerable benefits for the Centre as well as for the awardees. Participation is not limited to the awardees from one competition, but includes some from previous years. These sessions focus principally on strengthening the conception and design of awardees' projects (in part through training in specific methodologies), orienting them to the complexities of multidisciplinary research, and building links for dialogue among awardees and with IDRC and other researchers in their fields.

An external body with appropriate expertise would organize, manage and record the results of these events, limiting the demands on the time and energies of UPE team members, and making more effective use of their expertise.

#### *Linking awardees with other UPE projects and activities*

Giving awards to applicants whose proposals address questions or themes that are the focus of UPE projects, or that focus on a particular UPE project, would be one mechanism for developing links between awardees and UPE team members and projects.

Giving awards to applicants whose proposals address questions or themes that have been raised in UPE projects and discussions, but are not addressed by them, could foster results that contribute to the broadening or deepening of UPE themes.

Awards for project-based "applied" research could place priority on activities that would serve as demonstration or pilot projects for UPE themes or for ideas resulting from UPE projects.

The strategy for developing such links requires a clear statement of priorities in the screening and selection of proposals (for example through the allocation of a percentage of budget to particular types of proposals). Awards for such proposals would require the time and attention of team members to communicate with the awardee, the supervisors at the home and host campuses, the contact at the non-academic institution, and UPE project leaders to ensure timeliness and appropriateness of contacts, and to encourage communications among these independently of UPE team members.

#### *Linking awardees with other researchers (networking)*

UPE team members would be required to devote some time in their ongoing networking with researchers to introducing awardees to researchers who work in similar and related areas. Attending conferences and other meetings with awardees is one example of such networking. The body managing program logistics would organize the attendance and participation of awardees and could also send its representatives to these events.

### *Review of awardee progress and final reports/theses*

Notes in some Agropolis files and comments from past awardees indicate that at least in some cases there has been little or no feedback to awardees about their final reports and theses. Demands on Centre staff time have meant that many in fact have not been read or reviewed. Such feedback is a potential tool for maintaining contact with awardees, strengthening their links with the Centre and UPE networks, and encouraging them to continue working in UPE-related research and applied development. The time needed for review and analysis to provide useful feedback can be considerable, and could be factored into the workplans of UPE team members.

### *4.4 General management and administration elements*

The UPE team wishes to outsource the administration of the new program. The only variations to consider are therefore what specific tasks to include in the operations of the program beyond those summarized in part 3.4. Each one will incur some additional costs in time and money.

### *Fact sheets summarizing awardees' projects and results*

The Agropolis Fact Sheets have been reported as very effective means of communicating the results of awardees' work, and of providing specific examples of research and applications supported by CFP and of lessons learned. They are, however, incomplete, as not all Agropolis awardees' projects have been summarized in a Fact Sheet. Before Fact Sheets in a future program are produced, UPE team members would review all awardees' final reports/theses in order to select the most appropriate projects and results. Producing Fact Sheets requires analytic and synthetic skills, comprehension of the goals and objectives of the program, and strong communications and writing skills. The production of content would be contracted to individuals by the body managing logistics, which would manage or contract out the publication in various media.

### *Presentations at conferences and other meetings*

Presentations about the program would be made at scientific, professional and development-oriented conferences, workshops and other events by UPE team members and other IDRC staff, representatives of the body managing logistics, and awardees. These presenters would benefit from having a fact sheet or background briefing about the program which could be produced or contracted by the body managing logistics. Producing this material would require knowledge and understanding of the program goals, objectives and results. The body managing logistics would manage the travel and accommodation arrangements for awardees.

### *Selecting, editing and producing a volume of awardee papers*

Publishing research papers produced by awardees is an effective way of recognizing their contributions and of drawing attention to little-explored issues and emerging trends. It would require considerable time commitment of UPE team members and potentially other IDRC staff and external experts, including awardee supervisors, to produce more volumes like the first Agropolis one. The time needed to review awardee reports and select authors; and to then review, select and edit papers would be factored into the workplans of UPE team members, although editing could be sub-contracted. The design, printing, advertising, distribution and sales would be managed by the body managing logistics, or sub-contracted to another organization with experience co-publishing with IDRC.

#### *4.5 Impact on IDRC*

A program of awards for young researchers has impacts on IDRC internally with respect to its budget, its effect on the UPE PI (input and feedback from the results of awardees' projects and time dedicated by UPE team members to awards-related activities), and its potential to open new areas of research by other PIs and to broaden the reach of its research networks. The experience with the Agropolis awards has been that the program has had on balance a very positive impact. The Centre manages these impacts through its decisions on the allocation of human and financial resources, and the design of the program.

Externally, the program affects the image and reputation of IDRC in Canada and internationally as a sponsor of development research. Agropolis has easily been identified as an IDRC program because it has been wholly managed and administered by the Centre. The quality of the program has been ensured by CFP's management of the selection process, in which CFP screened applications and appointed an Advisory Committee of internationally-recognized researchers which participated in the final selection, provided advice to strengthen awardees' project design, and provided advice on the direction and policy of the program. These factors ensured the credibility and reputation of Agropolis. Having an external body manage the program logistics would strengthen the Centre's links with that body, which will to some measure then be identified at large as responsible program. How that image is projected must be carefully considered.

Finally, given the success of Agropolis, it seems evident that abandoning the provision of support to young researchers independently of projects would have a negative impact on the development of research in new and unexplored areas, as well as to IDRC's reputation.

### **5. Options**

Four basic options exist for UPE:

- A. Keeping the program entirely within IDRC
- B. Contracting all basic administrative functions and management logistics to an external body (EA)

C. Contracting the entire program to an external body (EA)

D. Abandoning the idea of a program of awards for young researchers

The matrix below illustrates the distribution of tasks between UPE and other bodies under the first three options. UPE has already indicated that it has rejected Option D, as the team feels that a young researchers awards program has a value which UPE wishes to maintain and enhance. Given the success of Agropolis, it seems evident that abandoning the provision of support to young researchers independently of projects would have a negative impact on the development of research in new and unexplored areas, as well as to IDRC's reputation.

The chief benefits from the Agropolis awards have been the building of individual capacities in an emerging field, pushing the boundaries of the field by a deliberate use of multidisciplinary methods, and actively involving non-academic bodies in research projects to foster practical

FUNCTION/TASK		OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C
<b>PRELIMINARIES</b>				
	Developing program goals and objectives	UPE	UPE	UPE/EB
	Designing and producing application material	CTAP	EB	EB
	Distributing application materials	UPE/CTAP	EB	EB
<b>EVALUATION AND SELECTION</b>				
	Receiving applications and verifying their completeness	CTAP	EB	EB
	Screening applications	UPE	UPE/EB	EB
	Selecting awardees	UPE	UPE	EB/UPE
	Advisory Committee (AC) appointment	UPE	UPE	EB/UPE
	Preparing AC contracts	GAD	GAD	EB/UPE
	AC: meeting organization and recording	UPE*	EB	EB
<b>AWARD TAKE-UP ACTIVITIES</b>				
	Notices of awards	CTAP	EB	EB
	Preparing awardee contracts	GAD	GAD	EB
	Issuing payments to awardees	CTAP	EB	EB
	Organizing and managing workshops / summer institutes, etc. for awardees	UPE*	EB	EB
	Identifying participants workshops/summer institutes, etc. for awardees	UPE	UPE/EB	EB
	Linking awardees with each other	UPE	UPE/EB	EB
	Linking awardees with other UPE projects and activities	UPE	UPE	UPE/EB
	Linking awardees with other researchers (networking)	UPE	UPE	EB/UPE
	Monitoring awardee progress reports	CTAP	EB	EB
	Reviewing awardee final reports/theses	UPE	UPE	UPE/EB
	Approving and issuing extensions	UPE/CTAP	UPE/EB	EB

FUNCTION/TASK		OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C
<b>GENERAL MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING</b>				
	Records management: general program files	UPE	EB	EB
	Records management: awardee files	CTAP	EB	EB
	Records management: AC files	UPE	EB	EB
	Records management: program database	UPE/CTAP*	EB	EB
	Preparing summaries of awardee reports for UPE team meetings	UPE*	EB	EB
	Preparing summaries of awardee reports and of program for external distribution	UPE*	EB	EB
	Selecting awardee workshop papers	UPE	EB	EB
	Editing awardee workshop papers and publishing the volume	UPE*	EB	EB
	Fact sheets summarizing awardees' projects and results	UPE*	EB	EB
	Preparing reports, documents, articles for public distribution	UPE*	EB	EB
	Presentations on program at conferences/events	UPE	UPE/EB	UPE/EB
	Monitoring program budget	UPE	UPE/EB	EB
	Annual program review	UPE	UPE/EB	UPE/EB
	Analysis of program and trends	UPE	UPE/EB	UPE/EB
	Program development and revision	UPE	UPE/EB	UPE/EB

\* task may be sub-contracted; all contracts under Options A and B are prepared by GAD

UPE/EB - indicates possible sharing or division of task/application of research results, through both applications in projects and input to policy discussions.

In the Agropolis model, awardees' projects were conceived and funded separately from all other CFP activities. One of the cumulative results of the program has been to stimulate consideration of how to connect the activities of awardees and the results of their work more effectively with other researchers, and especially with IDRC projects. This desire for more connection between awardees and IDRC is echoed in the responses I received from past awardees, and in the



EcoHealth tracer study. The suggestions in that study for mentorship and supervision from IDRC staff and trainers, a field manual, and feedback to final reports apply to a UPE program as well. As the EcoHealth tracer study observes, however, “[T]hese suggestions are labour intensive and may not be feasible for the [UPE] team, in light of their commitments to other program areas. In the context of devolution, however, this level of support may be possible from the networks of (...) experts and practitioners that are currently being developed in the regions.”

### *Option A*

This option keeps the entire program within IDRC by rationalizing application and publicity materials and contracting a number of tasks to individual consultants.

*Preliminary tasks:* UPE would be responsible for developing the program goals and objectives (including selecting among the variables listed in part 4). CTAP would rationalize the design and production of application material (including basic publicity materials), and UPE and CTAP would use their own networks and facilities to distribute the application materials.

*Evaluation and selection:* CTAP would receive applications and verify their completeness. UPE would manage most of the remaining tasks (screening applications; appointing the Advisory Committee; selecting awardees) and contract the organization and recording of the AC meeting (whether either face-to-face or teleconference). GAD would prepare the contracts for the AC members and the meeting contractor.

*Award take-up activities:* CTAP would issue the notices of awards, awardee contracts and payments, and monitor awardee reports. UPE would manage the other tasks (identifying participants in workshops/summer institutes for awardees, linking of awardees with each other, with UPE projects and activities and with other researchers, and reviewing awardee final reports/theses). It would contract the organization and management of workshops, etc. for awardees, and approve extensions (CTAP would issue notices of extensions). GAD would prepare awardee contracts and those for all contractors.

*General management and administration, follow-up and monitoring:* CTAP would manage the awardee files. UPE would manage the general program and Advisory Committee files. Either UPE or CTAP would manage the program database, or it could be contracted. UPE would make presentations on the program at conferences, etc., and conduct an annual program review, analyze or track program trends, and develop and revise the program. In conjunction with GAD, it would monitor the program budget. All other tasks would be contracted (preparation of summaries of awardee reports for UPE team meetings, preparation of fact sheets summarizing awardees’ projects and results, preparation of reports, documents, articles for public distribution). GAD would prepare all contracts. UPE would select awardee workshop papers, and contract for their editing and publication in a volume.

This option would allow UPE the most opportunities to have input from awardees. Screening applications would require appreciable time commitments from team members in the month following the reception of applications. Most of the other management and administration tasks would require liaison with and /or supervision of contractors, and could be scheduled so as not to add much time commitment to team members' workload. Liaison and coordination with CTAP and GAD would be required for specific routine tasks. These latter tasks were managed in similar fashion for the Agropolis program, and the CTAP had drafted a rationalization of the application form. They should not require additional efforts.

### *Option B*

This option keeps the policy and selection tasks with UPE and contracts the operation and management of the program to an external body (EB). GAD will prepare the general contract.

*Preliminary tasks:* UPE would be responsible for developing the program goals and objectives (including selecting among the variables listed in part 4). The external body would rationalize the design and production of application material (including basic publicity materials), and distribute the application materials, supplementing its own lists of target audiences with lists from UPE.

*Evaluation and selection:* The EB would receive applications and verify their completeness. UPE would manage most of the remaining tasks (screening applications; appointing the Advisory Committee; selecting awardees) and contract the organization and recording of the AC meeting (whether either face-to-face or teleconference). One variation would have the EB conduct the screening by experts approved by UPE. GAD would prepare the contracts for the AC members and the meeting contractor.

*Award take-up activities:* The EB would issue the notices of awards, awardee contracts and payments, issue payments and monitor awardee reports. It would organize and manage workshops and other events for awardees, and issue extensions. UPE would advise the EB about participants to invite to workshops, etc., and coordinate with the EB in activities to link awardees with each other. UPE will link awardees with projects and activities and with other researchers, review awardee final reports and theses, and approve extensions.

*General management and administration, follow-up and monitoring:* The EB would manage almost all these tasks. Both UPE and the EB would make presentations on the program at conferences, etc.. The EB would monitor the program budget. UPE would conduct an annual program review, analyze or track program trends, and develop and revise the program with input from the EB.

This option would require UPE to name one or two members to act as liaison with the EB and monitor its activity on a regular schedule, particularly during the first year of such an

arrangement. Initial contract negotiations may require up to a week of UPE time; liaison and coordination may require up 2-3 days a month.

UPE would control the quality of awards by managing the selection process. The EB would tend to be identified by awardees and their supervisors as the organization responsible for the program, as it would receive the applications, announce the awards, send the cheques and collect the reports.

Contractual provisions to identify IDRC in all documents, publicity and correspondence as the program's originator as well as funder will have some mitigating effect on this perception. UPE should consider how much time team members would need to allocate to active engagement with awardees and supervisors, particularly when announcements are made and awardees begin their work.

### *Option C*

This option keeps the policy tasks with UPE and contracts all the operation and management of the program, including selection of awardees, to an external body (EB). GAD will prepare the general contract.

*Preliminary tasks:* UPE would be responsible for developing the program goals and objectives (including selecting among the variables listed in part 4), and possibly with input from the EB after the first year. The external body would rationalize the design and production of application material (including basic publicity materials), and distribute the application materials, supplementing its own lists of target audiences with lists from UPE

*Evaluation and selection:* The EB would receive applications and verify their completeness. With advice from UPE on the appointment of experts to screen applications and sit on the Advisory Committee (a UPE team member may be among the experts), it would screen applications and select awardees. It would organize and manage the AC meeting and prepare all contracts.

*Award take-up activities:* The EB would issue the notices of awards, awardee contracts and payments, issue payments and monitor awardee reports. It would organize and manage workshops and other events for awardees, identify participants in these events, and link awardees with each other. The EB would collaborate with UPE to link awardees with projects and activities and with other researchers, and in reviewing awardee final reports and theses. It would approve and issue extensions.

*General management and administration, follow-up and monitoring:* The EB would manage almost all these tasks. Both UPE and the EB would make presentations on the program at conferences, etc.. The EB would monitor the program budget. UPE would conduct an annual

program review, analyze or track program trends, and develop and revise the program with input from the EB.

This option would require UPE to name one or two members to act as liaison with the EB and monitor its activity on a regular schedule, particularly during the first year of such an arrangement. Initial contract negotiations may require up to a week of UPE time; liaison and coordination may require up to 2-3 days a month.

Under this option, the EB would be perceived as the program's originator. There is a risk that the program would be identified completely with the EB, with IDRC solely as the funder. Such perceptions may reduce the potential for engaging awardees with UPE activities. Contractual provisions to identify IDRC in all documents, publicity and correspondence as the program's originator as well as funder might have some mitigating effect on this perception. UPE should consider how much time team members would need to allocate to active engagement with awardees and supervisors, particularly when announcements are made and awardees begin their work.

## **6. Conclusions**

As reported in the preliminary progress report, opinions stated in interviews and the review of available documentation indicated that the Agropolis Awards program clearly met its main objective of contributing to the development of expertise in urban agriculture, through issue-focussed graduate training in developing and developed countries and institutional networking. The research of the awardees addressed and expanded issues related to CFP themes, while the 2002 workshop helped to develop links among awardees.

The management of the day-to-day operations of the program was the main strength of its administration as long as it was the responsibility of the full-time coordinator. The effect of the gradual elimination of this full-time position and the distribution of operational and administrative tasks among different PI team members for the 2004-5 competition indicate that this concentration may have been its Achilles' heel – and so paradoxically its main weakness.

The papers, theses and effects of the results of awardees' research in a number of communities constitute the main strengths of the program outcomes. The absence of effective mechanisms to develop and maintain active connections among awardees and between awardees and CFP/UPE, as manifested in comments in interviews and in the difficulty of contacting past awardees, represents their main weakness.

This assessment of the Agropolis Awards program and the results of the UPE team brainstorming session suggest that the basic structure and orientation of Agropolis be maintained in the new awards program. UPE has clearly indicated that the administration and management of the program's operations must be contracted to another body. Details concerning the content

of application materials, the types and nature of awards (and their distribution among Master's and PhD students, and between South and Canadian students), the nature of the Advisory Committee mandate, the ways of connecting awardees and their work more effectively with UPE – can only be determined through further discussion by UPE team members in light of the variables outlined in Part 4 of this report. Recommendations concerning a number of these choices follow in Part 6 below.

## **7. Recommendations**

The following recommendations and suggestions are presented for UPE to consider.

### *General*

UPE should not implement Option C. The lack of direct control of selection and the increased challenges to ensuring awardee feedback to UPE themes represent too great a risk.

UPE should develop Terms of Reference for a call for proposals to manage the logistics of a new program of awards to young researchers as suggested in Option B. The Terms should stipulate the tasks described in Part 3 and a selection of the tasks described in Part 4, with the requirements for their delivery.

UPE should consider implementing Option A as a pilot for the first year of the new program.

UPE should begin to map Canadian institutions with appropriate transdisciplinary orientation to determine which have the capacity and capability to manage the new program.

UPE should decide which tasks described in Part 4 (variables) it wishes to include in a new program of awards to young researchers. The remaining recommendations concern these tasks, following the order of their appearance in Part 4.

### *Preliminaries*

In *developing a general policy* for the new awards program, UPE should consider the resource requirements of potential methods for connecting awardees and UPE (including creating repositories by storing knowledge and making it easily available to users; providing access to knowledge and facilitating its transfer; and establishing an environment that encourages the creation, transfer, and use of knowledge).

The *application materials should be rationalized* along the lines suggested by the CTAP draft of June 2005. The EcoHealth August 2006 call for proposals and letter to supervisors include wording that would help further to refine these materials.

The program should have *a flexible approach to UPE themes*. The call for proposals should be open, while indicating themes and approaches of particular interest or priority. These may change from year to year.

### *Types and nature of awards*

The awards should continue to emphasize the transfer of skills and knowledge to non-researchers, and the attachment of the awardee to a non-academic organization.

There should be no fixed ratio between Master's and PhD awards. Final decisions should be based on a combination of the quality and feasibility of the research proposal and design, and the value of its potential contribution to UPE goals and objectives.

The percentage of awards for Canadians should be approximately the same percentage as the Centre uses for overall support to Canadian grant-holders.

Initially, approximately one-quarter of awards should be allocated for applied research. This proportion should be reviewed and revised annually.

UPE should consider encouraging one or more of the following types of proposals from young researchers:

- proposals that address questions or themes that are the focus of UPE projects, or that focus on a particular UPE project
- proposals that address questions or themes that have been raised in UPE projects and discussions, but are not addressed by them
- proposals for project-based “applied” research that would serve as demonstration or pilot projects for UPE themes or for ideas resulting from UPE projects
- proposals that address issues of interest to research institutions and non-academic organizations in the South (i.e., extending the criterion used by the IRD *Bourses d’insertion*).

### *Selection*

UPE should conduct the screening of applications.

The Advisory Committee should have a defined role in advising on the direction and content of the awards program in addition to functioning as a selection committee.

UPE should provide a briefing to the Advisory Committee before its meeting on program policy, including items to be discussed.

#### *Award take-up activities*

The program should include a training workshop for awardees before they begin their work, in order to strengthen project designs; expose awardees to UPE concepts (especially how it understands multi/inter/transdisciplinarity); and to lay the groundwork for networking among awardees and between them and UPE.

UPE should consider holding summer institutes for awardees. These could be sub-contracted to regional institutions.

UPE team members should allocate specific time in their workplans to introduce awardees to researchers who work in similar and related areas.

UPE team members should allocate specific time in their workplans to reviewing the final reports and theses of awardees, and to providing them feedback.

#### *General management and administration elements*

Fact sheets for every completed awardee project/thesis should be contracted and mounted on the program's website. "Fact sheets" includes text and multi-media materials.

UPE (and where appropriate, the body managing logistics) should allocate specific time in staff workplans to attending conferences and other meetings to present the program.

UPE should allocate specific time in staff workplans to selecting and editing awardee papers.

## Appendix A

### *Individuals interviewed*

UPE and former CFP staff: Ana Boischio, Liliane Castets-Poupart, Luc Mougeot, Mark Redwood, Wendy Storey, Brenda Lee Wilson.

GAD staff: Monika Dankers

CTAP staff: Rita Bowry, Jean-Claude Dumais.

EcoHealth team member: Renaud DePlaen

Former Advisory Committee member: Diana Lee-Smith.

Former awardees responding: George Kwasi Danson (2001), Nikita Eriksen-Hamel (2002), Stephanie Gabel (2000), Chuo Adamu Nsangu (2001), Nongasida Yameogo (2003)

### *Documents reviewed and referenced*

1998 - 2001 Progress Report on the AGROPOLIS International Graduate Research Awards in Urban Agriculture. June 8, 2001.

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Cities Feeding People Program Initiative - Phase 2 Prospectus 2000- 2004. October 19, 2000.

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Ecohealth Research Awards Program Tracer Study - FINAL DRAFT - Jessica White. January, 2006.



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Minutes of the AGROPOLIS Advisory Committee Meetings: March 13-14, 2000; March 26, 2001; March 25 and 27, 2002; April 23-24, 2003; April 29-30, 2004; and May 30, 2005.

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Report by Ana Boischio September 12, 2005

Review of the Small Grants Mechanism. George Tillman Consulting for the Special Initiatives Division, IDRC. June 2003

Advanced Education and Training Options Available to IDRC. George Tillman Consulting, for the Special Initiatives Division, IDRC. April 2005

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The AGROPOLIS Award - Administrator Duties and the Transfer Management and Administration: Key Elements. Based on Revised notes from Wendy Storey October 27, 2004. (n.d.)

The AGROPOLIS International Graduate Research Awards in Urban Agriculture. Power-point presentation retrieved January 31, 2006.

Urban Poverty and Environment - Proposed Prospectus 2005-2010. February 22, 2005.

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## Appendix B

### EVALUATION OF AGROPOLIS AWARDS FOR RESEARCH INTO URBAN AGRICULTURE

#### Preliminary report on progress - March 10, 2006

##### 1. Activities to date:

Appended as an Appendix is a list of the individuals I have interviewed, and of the documentation I have reviewed so far. Analysis of the data, information and views collected has so far concentrated chiefly on the operation and administration of the program. This continues, along with a more general review of the relation of awardee's topics to CFP themes, and the program's overall contribution to CFP themes and projects. I also hope to contact some former holders of awards through the [Agropolis-Alum@iwmisa.exch.cgiar.org](mailto:Agropolis-Alum@iwmisa.exch.cgiar.org) listserv.

In our interview on February 27, Mark Redwood suggested a modification to the proposed workplan: he asked that I submit to him as soon as possible a list of questions that he will discuss with the UPE team members, and then provide me with feedback. With this additional information and the completed analyses of project documentation and interviews, I will then prepare a draft final report and recommendations to present to the team in May, as scheduled.

##### 2. General observations:

a) Program objective: the general objective of the AGROPOLIS Awards was "To contribute to the development of expertise sanctioned by a university degree and field experience in various areas of specialization in urban agriculture, through issue-focussed graduate training in developing and developed countries and institutional networking." (PAD approved October 2, 2001). This objective has clearly been met, with some 63 awards for post-graduate studies at the Master's, PhD and post-doctoral levels. The topics of awardees' research have both addressed and expanded issues related to CFP themes, while the 2002 workshop is reported to have helped develop links among awardees.

b) Administration: a general first impression is that until 2004, the day-to-day operations of the program were managed very effectively as a result of considerable dedication and imagination of the program coordinator. The gradual elimination of this full-time position and the distribution of operational and administrative tasks among different PI team members for the 2004-5 competition created tensions that detracted from the team's working environment. Holding a virtual meeting of the Advisory Committee rather than having the group meet physically also appears to have reduced its role to selection, as no comments or advice on policy or program operations were recorded.

Further analysis and reflection will clarify and define explicitly the nature, range and extent of the administrative tasks required by this type of awards program. This should lead to a more coherent allocation of responsibilities and authorities, and to a better appreciation of the consequences of specific policy decisions. These tasks and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, communications (within IDRC; with an Advisory/Selection Committee; with candidates and awardees); logistics; financial management; administration structure; and monitoring and evaluation.

### 3. Early conclusions and recommendations:

- a) The program needs fine-tuning. Both interviews and documentation suggest that the details of planning and organisation of AGROPOLIS operations were left to the administrator. While the concept and substance of the awards program was carefully elaborated, the mechanisms for its functioning seem almost to have been allowed to evolve as circumstances suggested.
- b) The Advisory Committee: the need for and role of this committee should be explored. The value of policy and program advice that a well-selected and briefed committee can provide may well outweigh its role in selection and support of awardees.
- c) Whether the program should remain with the PI, or be moved to CTAP, or to a third-party administrator cannot be decided until the PI establishes clear objectives for it, and in particular the contribution it is expected to make to UPE objectives and projects.
- d) Administration expenditure: technical monitoring should reside with subject-matter experts (e.g. if the program remains in IDRC, the PI team members); basic administrative and operational functions should be costed separately (again, if the program remains with IDRC, administrative costs should be allocated to Centre administration).
- e) Administration as investment: an important long-term value of awards programs is their development and nurturing of a new generation of researchers. This benefit can only be realized with a coherent and consistent management of relations with candidates and awardees.
- f) The AGROPOLIS Awards program displays a number of “IDRC-salient elements”<sup>6</sup>: concern with basic scientific standards, concern with participatory methodologies, introduction/strengthening of gender issues and methodologies, introduction/support of multidisciplinary, introducing/testing of concepts and methodologies, reinforcing/consolidating/broadening the reach of successful results (includes training young

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<sup>6</sup> I refer here to my Review of the Small Grants Mechanism

researchers), dissemination and application of research results, and concern with the influence and effect of research and research results on policy and practice.

#### 4. Questions submitted to Mark Redwood March 5, 2006:

These questions are posed in the context of the Objectives & Expected Outcomes of UPE as posted on the UPE Web page:

1. What relation would an awards program have to these objectives? How would awardees be expected to contribute to PI projects and activities? Could awardess be associated or affiliated with specific projects?
2. Where would awards fit into the UPE strategy and program objectives? Would they focus on the themes of urban agriculture and water and sanitation; or contribute to the exploratory work on waste management and vulnerabilities to natural disasters; or both? Or, would they be used to identify neglected areas of knowledge where investment in path-breaking research is needed?
3. What outcomes would be expected from a UPE awards program?
4. What need exists to foster the development or expansion of a cadre of researchers in the areas/disciplines/fields with which the UPE PI is engaging? Has the literature review preliminary to designing UPE identified areas where more researchers need to be trained?
5. What elements of UPE as set out in the Prospectus could benefit from an awards program? What kind of benefit, and how would it be generated?
6. How would the results of awards feed back into UPE activities, concretely in projects and networks, more generally into policy and program development?
7. Does the PI envisage incorporating awards for completion of research requirements of graduate degrees as part of individual projects? If so, would awards be made competitively (as with AGROPOLIS) or formatively (i.e., would team members identify potential candidates and help them develop proposals)?
8. What role in networking of researchers under UPE would an awards program have?
9. What role would an Advisory Committee of an awards program have in relation to UPE?

## Appendix

### Individuals interviewed:

Ana Boischio, Rita Bowry, Liliane Castets-Poupart, Monika Dankers, Jean-Claude Dumais, Luc Mougeot, Mark Redwood, Wendy Storey, Diana Lee-Smith, Brenda Lee Wilson.

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